WE CLAIM:

1   1.   A method for facilitating a chat session between a

2   first user and a second user, both visiting a first web server, the

3   method comprising:

4   receiving, from the first user, a first user ID corresponding

5   to the first user and an address of the first web server;

6   receiving,   from   the   second   user,   a   second   user   ID

7   corresponding to the second user and the address of the first web

8   server;

9   providing, to the first user, at least an indication of the

10   second user ID;

11   receiving, from the first user, a request to open one of a

12   public chat session, a semi-public chat session and a private chat

13   session with the second user;

14   transmitting, to the second user, an indication that the first

15   user has requested one of the public chat session, the semi-public

16   chat session and the private chat session; and

17   receiving, from the second user, an acceptance to enter the

18   chat session designated by the first user.

1   2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the chat session is a

2   public chat session and wherein the chat session is visible to

3   other users.

1   3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the chat session is a

2   private chat session and wherein the chat session is not visible to

3   other users.

1   4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the chat session is a

2   semi-public chat session and wherein the chat session is visible

3   only to users having a predetermined user profile.

1   5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the providing step further

2   comprises:

3   receiving, from the first user, a query for information

4   regarding other users visiting the first web site; and

5   searching a user database to determine which users are

6   visiting the first web site.

1   6.   The method of claim 5, wherein the query includes a

2   request for other users having predetermined personal data.

1   7.   A method for providing usage information of a first web

2   site designated by a user, the method comprising:

3   receiving, from the user, a designation of the first web

4   site as a homepage;

5   monitoring usage of the homepage by a plurality of users;

6   and

7   transmitting data representative of the usage to the user

8   when the user is visiting a second web page.

1   8.   The method of claim 7, further comprising:

2   displaying to the user the usage information in a graphical

3   format.

1   9.   The method of claim 7, further comprising:

2   displaying to the user the usage information in a text

3   format.

1   10.   The method of claim 7, wherein the usage information

2   is displayed automatically to the user.

1   11.   The method of claim 7, wherein the usage information

2   is displayed only upon a command generated by the user.

1 12. A computer-readable medium encoded with processing

2 instructions for implementing a method for facilitating a chat

3 session between a first user and second user, both visiting a

4 first web server, the method comprising:

5   receiving, from the first user, a first user ID

6 corresponding to the first user and an address of the first web

7 server;

8   receiving, from the second user, a second user ID

9 corresponding to the second user and the address of the first web

10 server;

11   providing, to the first user, at least an indication of the

12 second user ID;

13   receiving, from the first user, a request to open one of a

14 public chat session, a semi-public chat session and a private

15 chat session with the second user;

16   transmitting, to the second user, an indication that the

17 first user has requested one of the public chat session, the

18 semi-public chat session and the private chat session; and

19   receiving, from the second user, an acceptance to enter the

20 chat session designated by the first user.

1 13. An apparatus for facilitating a chat session between a

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2   first user and second user, both visiting a first web server,

3   comprising:

4   a processor; and

5   a memory storing processing instructions for

6   controlling the processor, the processor operative with the

7   processing instructions to:

8   receive, from the first user, a first user ID

9   corresponding to the first user and an address of the first web

10   server;

11   receive, from the second user, a second user ID

12   corresponding to the second user and the address of the first web

13   server;

14   provide, to the first user, at least an indication of

15   the second user ID;

16   receive, from the first user, a request to open one of

17   a public chat session, a semi-public chat session and a private

18   chat session with the second user;

19   transmit, to the second user, an indication that the

20   first user has requested one of the public chat session, the

21   semi-public chat session and a private chat session; and

22   receive, from the second user, an acceptance to enter

23   the chat session designated by the first user.

1   14.   A computer-readable medium encoded with processing

2   instructions for implementing a method for providing usage

3   information of a first web site designated by a user, the method

4   comprising:

5   receiving, from the user, a designation of the first

6   web page as a homepage;

7   monitoring usage of the homepage by a plurality of

8   users; and

9   transmitting data representative of the usage to the

10   user when the user is visiting a second web page.

1   15.   An apparatus for providing usage information of a

2   first web site designated by a user, comprising:

3   a processor; and

4   a memory storing processing instructions for

5   controlling the processor, the processor operative with the

6   processing instructions to:

7   receive, from the user, a designation of the first

8   web page as a homepage;

9   monitor usage of the homepage by a plurality of

10   users; and

11   transmit data representative of the usage to the

12 user when the user is visiting a second web page.

1   16. A method for facilitating a communication between a

2 first user and second user, both visiting a first web server,

3 the method, comprising:

4   receiving, from the first user, a first user ID

5 corresponding to the first user and an address of the first web

6 server;

7   receiving, from the second user, a second user ID

8 corresponding to the second user and the address of the first web

9 server;

10   providing, to the first user, at least an indication of

11 the second user ID; and

12   receiving, from the first user, a request to

13 communicate with the second user.

1   17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

2   transmitting, to the second user, an indication that

3 the first user has requested a communication; and

4   receiving, from the second user, an acceptance to

5 receive a communication from the first user.

1   18.   A computer readable medium encoded with processing

2   instructions for performing a method for facilitating a

3   communication between a first user and second user, both visiting

4   a first web server, the method comprising:

5   receiving, from the first user, a first user ID

6   corresponding to the first user and an address of the first web

7   server;

8   receiving, from the second user, a second user ID

9   corresponding to the second user and the address of the first web

10   server;

11   providing, to the first user, at least an indication of

12   the second user ID; and

13   receiving, from the first user, a request to

14   communicate with the second user.

1   19.   An apparatus for facilitating a communication between a

2   first user and second user, both visiting a first web server,

3   the apparatus comprising:

4   a processor; and

5   a memory storing processing instructions for

6   controlling the processor, the processor operative with the

7   processing instructions to:

8   receive, from the first user, a first user ID

9   corresponding to the first user and an address of the first web

10   server;

11   receive, from the second user, a second user ID

12   corresponding to the second user and the address of the first web

13   server;

14   provide, to the first user, at least an indication

15   of the second user ID;

16   receive, from the first user, a request to

17   communicate with the second user; and

18   provide to the second user an address for

19   communicating with the second user.